

Statement of Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Committee on the Judiciary
Before the Committee on House Administration
March 7, 2001

Chairman Ney, Mr. Hoyer, Members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to appear before you today with Mr. Conyers to present my first budget as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

The Committee on the Judiciary continues to be one of the most active in the House. In the 106th Congress, the Committee was referred over 15% of the total legislative measures introduced in the House. We were responsible for the enactment of 73 public laws and 21 private laws. These statistics understate the complex and controversial issues within the Committee's jurisdiction, including Constitutional amendments, immigration, crime, bankruptcy reform, and internet taxation and other intellectual property issues.

As you know from previous budget submissions when I served as Chairman of the Science Committee, I am not in the habit of asking for more funding than is necessary to do the job. As Science Chairman, I asked for increases of less than 3% each year.

The situation confronting the Judiciary Committee is quite different. The proposal before you today requests \$15.49 million to meet the Committee's needs over the next two years, a 27% increase over the previous two years. Let me explain why this is necessary.

First, the salary levels funded in the last Congress proved insufficient to retain and hire qualified professional staff, mostly attorneys, who often could earn more elsewhere. To compensate, equipment purchases were deferred as these funds were moved into the salary line. To maintain the Committee's expertise, I retained virtually all professional staff and have honored the salary commitments of the previous Chairman. The budget contains just an 8% increase in the salary line for the first session of the 107th Congress over the amount actually expended in the second session of the 106th Congress.

Second, the equipment line item in this budget request supports our commitment to the leadership's "electronic congress" initiative. This request includes funding to upgrade our main hearing room in 2001. More modest upgrades to the remaining two subcommittee hearing rooms would be performed in 2002. Included with these upgrades are the addition of assisted listening devices and other ADA compliance issues. These upgrades will enable teleconferencing and multi-media presentations. In addition, hearings would be broadcast on the web to make Congress' activities even more available to the public.

The previously insufficient salary level, combined with deferred equipment and software purchases and the upgrade to our hearing rooms, explains this request.

During the 106th Congress, the Judiciary Committee totaled 77 staff. During a meeting with Mr. Conyers shortly after becoming Chairman, I offered to increase the minority staff allocation from 20 to 22 slots. Correspondingly, the majority staff would decrease by two slots. This commitment increased the minority staff ratio to one-third of all staff slots, adjusting for nine non-partisan administrative

positions. I also have allocated one-third of the salary budget to the minority accordingly to be spent as the minority sees fit.

This is the first time the Judiciary Committee has achieved a one-third, two-thirds division of either non-administrative salaries or staff slots.

Late yesterday, Mr. Conyers raised additional concerns that two of the administrative slots should not be withheld from the one-third, two-thirds staff division I previously described. I would like to announce today that I will accommodate Mr. Conyers' request. This will result in a reduction in the administrative staff from nine to seven slots. It will also result in an additional \$300,000 over two years, of which the minority will receive one-third. This brings the total increase to the minority to three slots.

To my knowledge, I have accommodated all requests with regard to staff levels and salaries presented to me by the Ranking Member. In addition I have offered the minority their preferred additional office space in the Cannon Building.

In closing let me say I appreciate the spirit of cooperation, which the Ranking Member has demonstrated. I hope he agrees the minority has been treated with fairness in matters of committee administration and funding.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the Committee's attention to this request and would be happy to answer any questions.